

# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **FIVE FOOT VOICE**

*The Selected Works of Alise Versella*

Versella, Alise

AuthorHouse (172 pp.)

\$22.23 hardcover, \$11.70 paperback, \$9.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1456723224; January 19, 2011

## BOOK REVIEW

A debut collection of free verse about the occasional pleasures and constant pains of young love.

Versella's collection comprises nearly 150 poems, almost every one of them grappling with themes of unfulfilled promise or lost pleasures. To read these poems is to be transported back to the mercurial tragedies of youth; indeed, these poems may appeal most strongly to young adult readers. Versella's narrators often speak of their desire to be consumed in their relationships, sometimes quite literally; they have "Sugary red watermelon plush lips" and "pomegranate tongue[s]," "[l]ips sprinkled with crystallized / Sugar," or "maraschino cherry lips," "icing skin," "brown sugar skin" and an "artichoke heart." However, bodies are also depicted as poisoned, scarred, torn apart or drained by the effects of betrayal. The author often uses well-worn tropes of tragic love; from moths that "hover closer / To the flame" to the paradox of "[w]alking down a lonely path / We stand together / Yet so far apart," readers may find some of this material familiar. That said, Versella's poetry is a pleasure to read, as the author is boundlessly energetic and a promising technician. In this collection, she consistently demonstrates a knack for producing highly readable, irregularly rhyming free verse, and she works well with fixed qualitative meters as well as looser poetic structures. She crafts a unique blend of the symbolist and the confessional, working with different forms such as nursery rhymes and prose poems with ease.

A relentlessly evocative collection from a talented, promising newcomer.